

## Message Text

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R 151821Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5886

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 01231

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: ILLNESS OF FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF)

SECRETARY GENERAL GEORGES MARCHAIS

SUMMARY. AFTER SUFFERING WHAT HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY REPORTED AS A HEART ATTACK OR A STROKE, GEORGES MARCHAIS HAS BEEN HOSPITALIZED FOR AN INDETERMINATE PERIOD. MOST LIKELY IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF HIS ILLNESS WILL BE TO AID THE "HARD-LINERS" IN THEIR ATTEMPTS AT DAY-TO-DAY DIRECTION OF THE PCF'S AFFAIRS AND FURTHER EXACERBATE THE PCF/SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) QUARREL. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER SUFFERING WHAT HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS A HEART ATTACK WITH PERMANENT AFTER EFFECTS TO THE HEART MUSCLES AND AS A STROKE, GEORGES MARCHAIS WAS HOSPITALIZED IN THE EARLY EVENING OF JANUARY 14. THE PCF REACTED TO THE NEWS BY FIRST SAYING THAT IT WOULD IMMEDIATELY APPOINT AN INTERIM SECRETARY GENERAL TO LEAD THE PARTY IN TANDEM WITH ITS CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THEN, SECOND, ON JANUARY 15, BY SAYING THAT THERE  
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WOULD BE NO REORGANIZATION PENDING FURTHER MEDICAL INFORMATION. FOLLOWING THE LATTER STATEMENT, THE PCF

POLITBURO ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD "COLLECTIVELY ASSURE THE NORMAL FUNCTIONING OF THE PARTY" DURING MARCHAIS' ILLNESS.

2. THE PARTY IS AT SOME PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT "THE SUCCESSION IS NOT OPEN", NO DOUBT RECALLING THAT THE SAME PROBLEM EXISTED IN 1969 WHEN THEN SECRETARY GENERAL WALDECK ROCHET SUDDENLY BECAME ILL. THE PARTY WAITED SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE DESIGNATING A DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL (MARCHAIS) AND ALMOST THREE YEARS BEFORE CONFIRMING MARCHAIS IN HIS POST AS SECRETARY GENERAL. THE PROBLEM OF SUCCESSION IS THUS NOT NEW TO THE PCF AND THE JANUARY 15 ANNOUNCEMENT IS A CLEAR SIGNAL TO PARTY MILITANTS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC ALIKE THAT THERE WILL BE NO DEGRADATION IN THE CONSTANCY OF THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP.

3. THE INITIAL REACTION TO MARCHAIS' ILLNESS SUGGESTS THAT PARIS POLITICAL CIRCLES ASSUMED THAT L'HUMANITE EDITOR AND SOMETIME STALINIST ROLAND LEROY WOULD STEP INTO MARCHAIS' SHOES BY BECOMING SECRETARY GENERAL AD INTERIM. INITIAL PS REACTION WAS FEARFUL WITH SEVERAL PS LEADERS COMMENTING THAT THE QUARREL BETWEEN THE TWO PARTNERS OF THE UNITED LEFT COULD BE EXPECTED TO INTENSIFY. WITH THE PARTY NOW PROMISING NO DRASTIC REORGANIZATIONAL MEASURES, PS FEARS SEEM TO BE MUTED ALTHOUGH THERE IS UNDERSTANDABLE RELUCTANCE TO SPEAK BEFORE KNOWING FURTHER DETAILS OF MARCHAIS' PROGNOSIS.

4. WE HOPE TO HAVE SOME MEDICAL INFORMATION IN A DAY OR TWO, WHEN WE CAN BETTER JUDGE THE SERIOUSNESS OF MARCHAIS' ILLNESS.  
RUSH

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**TAGS:** PINT, FR, (MARCHAIS, GEORGES)  
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